

15 BAPTISM: BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

BAPTISM IS THE FIRST OF THE SACRAMENTS OF
INITIATION

-CCC, NOS. 1210-1284

A BAPTISMAL WITNESS TO JUSTICE FOR MINORITIES

In 1829, Bishop Benedict Joseph Fenwick of Boston founded a Catholic newspaper to explain, defend, and spread the teachings of the Catholic Church. By 1836 he decided it would be better to put the paper in the hands of the laity. He transferred the ownership to Patrick Donahue, who renamed the paper *The Boston Pilot*.

One of the *Pilot's* editors, John Boyle O'Reilly, assumed that office in 1876. He was born to a family of educators in Ireland. As a young man, he enlisted in the British army, where he worked covertly to advance the cause of Irish independence. When he was discovered, he was arrested, given a twenty-year prison term, and sent to a penal colony in western Australia. Eventually he escaped and made his way to Boston, where he became a reporter and then the editor of the *Pilot*.

For the next twenty years, O'Reilly was the foremost influence in directing Irish immigrants through the process of cultural assimilation. For a time his literary talents and friendly attitude toward the Protestant establishment earned him a favorite place in society and an invitation to join the exclusive Papyrus Club.

But he never forgot his ethnic roots or his Catholic faith. He used his gifts as a public speaker, civil rights leader, poet and novelist to bridge the gap between Catholics and Protestants in nineteenth-century Boston while enhancing Catholic identity in the process. He wrote a book of

Verse, *Songs from the Southern Seas*. He also wrote articles for *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Scribner's Monthly*.

He used the *Pilot* as a platform for defending an independent Ireland and addressing the rights of African Americans and Native Americans. He compared the oppression that these minorities were suffering to that which the Irish immigrants were experiencing. These oppressed groups had a friend in this man. He openly campaigned in the *Pilot* for political candidates who were for social reform. He joined several charitable organizations and was an outstanding proponent of Catholic education. He received honorary doctorates from Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C., and Notre Dame University, in South Bend, Indiana.

His unexpected death from a heart attack in 1890 was termed a "public calamity" by Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. "When he died," observes historian Mark Schneider, in *Boston Confronts Jim Crow*, "the opportunity slipped away for some kind of progressive association between Irish Catholics and members of Boston's small African American community. The light of 'green and black' unity flickered and died."¹³

Because of his forceful public presence and outstanding Catholic witness, the wake for O'Reilly was held in St. Mary's Church, in Charlestown, a neighborhood in Boston, where mourners by the thousands came to pay their respects.

The *Catechism* says that all who are reborn as children of God in Baptism "must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church and participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God" (CCC, no. 1270). God gave John Boyle O'Reilly the grace to live out. In a vigorous and inspiring manner, his baptismal commitment to the cause of Christ, the Church, and God's Kingdom. He showed how the laity can bring the Gospel to society and can make a difference.



13 Cited in Thomas H. O'Connor, *Boston Catholics* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 145.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

The Sacraments of Initiation-Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are the foundations of the Christian life. "Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation,' whose unity must be safeguarded" (CCC, no. 1285). We begin with our study of Baptism in this chapter and will treat the other two Sacraments in the following ones.

DYING AND RISING WITH CHRIST

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

— Rom 6:3-4

Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism.

-CCC, no. 1277

In his dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus taught that Baptism was necessary for salvation. "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (Jn 3:5). After his Resurrection, Jesus met with the eleven Apostles and gave them the commission to preach the Gospel and baptize, telling them, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk 16:16). The word *baptism* in its origins is Greek and means "emersion" and "bath." Immersion in water is a sign of death, and emersion out of the water means new life. To bathe in water is also to undergo cleansing. St. Paul sums up this truth when he says; "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col2: 12).

The origin and foundation of Christian Baptism is Jesus. Before starting his public ministry, Jesus submitted himself to the baptism given by John the Baptist. The waters did not purify him; he cleansed the waters. "He comes to sanctify the Jordan for our sake . . . to begin a new creation through the Spirit and water" (St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Liturgy of the Hours*, I, 634). Jesus' immersion in the water is a sign for all human beings of the need to die to themselves to do God's will. Jesus did not need to be baptized because he was totally faithful to the will of his Father and free from sin. However, he wanted to show his solidarity with human beings in order to reconcile them to the Father. By commanding his disciples to baptize all nations, he established the means by which people would die to sin—Original and actual—and begin to live a new life with God.

THE LITURGY OF BAPTISM

The meaning and grace of the sacrament of Baptism are clearly seen in the rites of its celebration.

— CCC, no. 1234

The eight major elements in the baptismal ceremony teach us the meaning of this Sacrament of Initiation and help us appreciate our life in Christ. Signs and symbols have their own capacity to communicate their meaning. Of course, the Sacrament is more than an instructive symbol; it accomplishes what it signifies.

The Sign of the Cross

At the beginning of the celebration, the celebrant traces the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the one being baptized. This recalls Christ's saving death and the redemption it brought. Baptism is a Sacrament of salvation.

Readings from Scripture

Proclaiming the Word of God in the midst of the community sheds divine light on the celebration and is meant to build the faith of all the participants. One of the traditional names for Baptism is "Illumination." The Holy Spirit fills the heart and mind with the light of revealed truth and enables the response of faith.

Exorcism and Anointing

Baptism liberates us from sin. An exorcism prayer is recited over the one being baptized, preparing the person to renounce sin and be released from evil. The celebrant anoints the person to be baptized with the Oil of Catechumens (an oil that has been blessed by the bishop for the candidates for Baptism) or imposes hands on the person. In this way, the person is being called to renounce sin and to leave behind the domination of the power of evil.

Blessing the Baptismal Water

Baptismal water is blessed at the Easter Vigil. Outside the Easter Season, the water used for Baptism can also be blessed at each celebration of the Sacrament. The blessing prayer asks the Father "that through his Son the power of the Holy Spirit may be sent upon the water, so that those who will be baptized may be 'born of water and the Spirit'" (CCC, no. 1238).

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

Those being baptized are asked to reject sin and Satan, and to profess their faith in the Triune God. In the case of infants, parents, godparents, and the entire community present for the liturgy do this on behalf of those who cannot yet speak for themselves.

The Essential Rite of the Sacrament

The bishop, priest, or deacon either pours water three times on the person's head or immerses the candidate in water three times. In the Latin Church, he accompanies the act with the words, "[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The celebrant matches each pouring or immersion with the invocation of each of the Divine Persons. The ritual of immersion or washing helps us understand that our sins are buried and washed away as we die with Jesus, and we are filled with divine light and life as we rise from immersion in the water or are cleansed by the pouring.

In the Eastern liturgies the catechumen turns toward the East and the priest says: "The servant of God, [Name], is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." At the invocation of each person of the Most Holy Trinity, the priest immerses the candidate in the water and raises him up again. (CCC, no. 1240)

"Today in all the rites, Latin and Eastern, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist" (CCC, no. 1233). After the completion of initiation, the neophytes or new members begin the period of continued learning and formation in Christian life called *Mystagogy*.

With regard to infants, in the Latin Church, the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist are received at a later time after Baptism. This is partly because of the emphasis on the bishop as the ordinary minister of Confirmation. Though the bishop cannot baptize everyone, he has a role in everyone's initiation into the Church by confirming them. In the Eastern Churches, the Baptism of infants is followed in the same ceremony by Confirmation (Chrismation) and Eucharist.

The Anointing with Sacred Chrism

The celebrant anoints the newly baptized with the sacred Chrism (a perfumed oil signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit), so that united with

God's people the person may remain forever a member of Christ, who is Priest, Prophet, and King. In the liturgy of the Eastern Churches, this anointing is the Chrismation, or the Sacrament of Confirmation, and is done immediately after Baptism. At the initiation of adults into the Church at the Easter Vigil, Confirmation follows Baptism.

Reception of the White Garment and the Candle

Following the Anointing with Chrism, the minister of Baptism presents the newly baptized with a white garment and a candle. The white garment shows that the newly baptized have put on Christ and have risen with him. To be clothed in the baptismal white garment is to be clothed in Christ's protective love. Included in this ceremony is the admonition to keep the garment unstained by sin. The Book of Revelation describes the significance of the white robe: "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14).

The candle is lit from the Paschal Candle, which represents the Risen Christ. The lighted candle reminds the newly baptized of the light of Christ they have received. It also reminds us that all those baptized in Christ are to be lights for the world.

These two symbols used at Baptism appear again in the Latin Church's funeral liturgy in the forms of the white pall covering the casket and the lighted Paschal Candle, which ordinarily stands near the casket. This is to remind us that the salvation and new life promised at Baptism can now be experienced fully by the one who has gone to God.

THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit" (JN 3:5). Christ commanded his disciples to preach the Gospel, draw people to faith in him, and baptize those who come to conversion. The Church does not neglect the mission she has received from Christ to ensure that all be baptized and reborn of water and the Spirit.

Who Can Baptize?

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using water and the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes. The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation. (CCC, no. 1256)

WHO CAN RECEIVE BAPTISM?

The Baptism of Adults

For adults today, the Church, after the Second Vatican Council, has restored the order of the Catechumenate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). **It** outlines the steps for the formation of catechumens, bringing their conversion to the faith to a greater maturity. **It** helps them respond more deeply to God's gracious initiative in their lives and prepares them for union with the Church community. This process is meant to form them into the fullness of the Christian life and to become disciples of Jesus, their teacher. This includes an initiation into the mystery of salvation, the practice of faith, hope, and love, and other virtues in a succession of liturgical rites.

Persons baptized into another Christian church and now seeking full communion with the Catholic Church are also welcomed to participate along with catechumens in the RCIA in the process of learning about the Catholic faith and being formed in that faith. They bring to the process of preparation their prior experience of Christian life and prayer. For a baptized Christian, reception into full communion with the Catholic Church involves reception of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and then a Profession of Faith followed by the celebration of Confirmation and the Eucharist.

SPONSORS FOR BAPTISM

Whenever a person is baptized, as an infant, as a child, or as an adult, there should be at least one person present who will act as sponsor for the one being baptized. The sponsor, commonly

referred to as one's godmother or godfather, accepts the responsibility of helping the person grow in the Catholic faith. One who acts as a sponsor for an infant or child agrees to help the parents teach their child about the faith and how to live as a practicing Catholic. One who acts as sponsor for an adult agrees to encourage and support the person, pray with and for the person, and offer whatever help, information, or support is needed while the person is preparing to enter the Church and then is living out the rest of his or her life as a practicing Catholic.

For a person to act as a sponsor for Baptism, he or she must be at least sixteen years old, must have already received all the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist), and must be living in a way that demonstrates that one's faith is strong enough to be able to fulfill the responsibilities involved with being a sponsor. A sponsor who is married must be married in accord with the laws of the Church (cf. CIC, can. 874).

The Baptism of Infants

Infant Baptism has been practiced since apostolic times. Infants need to be baptized because through this Sacrament, they are freed from Original Sin and are welcomed into the community of the Church, where they have access to the fullness of the means of salvation. Their parents, godparents, and the parish community commit themselves to their ongoing formation in faith and knowledge of the tradition of the Church. The best gift that parents can give their children is a life in the Church. "The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after

RCIA STEPS

For adults who have not yet been baptized, the RCIA has three major liturgical rites: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens; Election or Enrollment of Names, and Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. The celebration of initiation is followed by a postbaptismal catechesis, or *Mystagogy*. (For those already baptized, there are rites appropriate for their journey into full communion in the Catholic Church. These are sometimes celebrated separately from the catechumens, and sometimes in a combined rite with the catechumens.)

The process begins with the **Precatechumenate**, in which the person shows initial faith in Jesus Christ and the Church. This is a time for inquiry and the exploration of the beginnings of faith.

After the person has been given a fundamental understanding of the Gospel and has decided to take the first step to become a member of the Church, the person is brought into the Catechumenate at the Rite of Acceptance.

The period of the **Catechumenate** is a time for exploring the teachings of the faith in a deeper and more systematic manner within the context of worship and prayer. At Sunday Mass, the catechumens with their catechists are often dismissed after the homily for further, prayerful study of the Scripture readings for the day.

This period concludes with the **Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names**, which takes place on the First Sunday of Lent. This rite is celebrated by the bishop or his delegate, usually at the cathedral of the diocese. The catechumens' suitability and resolve to be initiated into the sacramental life of the Church is supported by the testimony of their sponsors and catechists. After this, the catechumens become known as the Elect.

The Elect enter the stage of **Purification and Enlightenment** that occurs during the season of Lent. They prepare themselves for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation by prayerful reflection. On the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent, the Scrutinies are celebrated. These rites, which take place during Mass, offer opportunities for the Elect to reflect on the full meaning of the step they are preparing to take. They are meant to bring God's illuminating Word to the Elect so that whatever is weak or sinful in their hearts can be healed and so that whatever is good in them can be strengthened. The parish community joins them by examining their own lives and interceding with God for the Elect. This period concludes at the Easter Vigil, when the Elect receive the Sacraments of Initiation and become full members of the Church and are called neophytes.

From Easter to Pentecost, there is a period of postbaptismal catechesis, or **Mystagogy**. This is a time for the neophytes, or newly initiated, along with the members of the parish to come closer together as a faith community to examine more deeply the Gospel, to share in the Eucharist, and to do works of charity.

During this joyful time, the neophytes' enthusiasm can inspire the faithful of the parish, who in turn can share their experiences of the faith with them.

birth (CCC, no. 1250; cf. *Code of Canon Law [Codex Juris Canonici; CIC]*, can. 867). However, the Church also teaches that the Baptism of an infant may be postponed if there is not a "founded hope" that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Faith (CIC, can. 868 §2).

There are the children-born and unborn—who die without Baptism. The Church entrusts them to the mercy of God, who wills that all people be saved. We recall Christ's tender welcome of children saying, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them" (Mk 10:14). Because of

this the Church confidently hopes for the salvation of children who die without Baptism.

Baptism of Blood, Baptism of Desire

Often the question is raised about those who die without Baptism. The *Catechism* offers this principle: "God has bound salvation to the sacrament of baptism, but he himself is not bound by the sacraments" (CCC, no. 1257). The Church holds that those who suffer and die for their faith in Christ before they could be baptized are saved by Baptism of Blood.

Candidates for Baptism who die before they receive the Sacrament but have repented their sins and have embraced Christ's love are saved by what is called Baptism of Desire. What about those people who have never had the Gospel presented to them, who do not know Jesus or the Church, yet seek the truth and try to do God's will as they understand it? "It is may be supposed that such persons would have desired baptism explicitly had they known its necessity" (CCC, no. 1260).

EFFECTS OF BAPTISM

Sins Forgiven

By Baptism all sins are forgiven, Original Sin and all personal sins, and temporal punishment due to sin is removed. After one has been reborn in Christ, there is nothing to prevent one's entry into God's Kingdom.

However, though all sins are removed, there remains, as an effect of Original Sin, the inclination to sin that is called *concupiscence*. This inclination to sin shows itself in what is sometimes referred to as a darkening of the mind and a weakening of the will, that is, the inability to know clearly the right or wrong of an action and/or the lack of strength to resist temptation and always to do the right thing no matter how hard this is. The effects of Original Sin need not harm us so long as we seek strength to resist them through the Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, prayer, a deepening spirituality, growth in virtue, and a wholehearted dependence on God.

Adopted Children of God

Baptism also gives us new life as adopted children of God. We become sharers of divine life and temples of the Holy Spirit. We are now made righteous by God and live in a state of grace, that is, we live in union with God because of his gracious and loving initiative. Our permanence in the state of grace is called *sanctifying grace* because God "sanctifies" us, that is, makes us his holy people by giving us his life. God continues to assist us by many helps that are called *actual graces*. Thus, we have the ability to live and act under the guidance and light of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This helps us mature in goodness through the practice of virtues, such as the Cardinal Virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

Initiated into the Church

By Baptism we become members of the Church, the Body of Christ. We share in the priesthood of Christ as well as his prophetic and royal mission. "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt 2:9). We enjoy the community we find in the Church, share our talents and gifts with its members, respond willingly to its teachings and requirements, and assume the responsibilities that our membership implies.

Bonded to Other Christians

Baptism provides a common foundation among all Christians, including those not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. The Church recognizes the validity of Baptism in other Christian Churches as long as the rite involved the pouring of or immersion in water, a Trinitarian formula, and the intention to baptize. Those who have been baptized have been saved by their faith in Christ and the grace of Baptism. "They therefore have a right to be called Christians and with good reason are accepted as brothers [and sisters] by the children of the Catholic Church" (CCC, no. 1271, citing UR, no. 3).

FROM THE CATECHISM

1. Why are the rites of Baptism so helpful for understanding this Sacrament?

The meaning and grace of the Sacrament of Baptism are clearly seen in the rites of its celebration. By following the gestures and words of this celebration with attentive participation, the faithful are initiated into the riches this sacrament signifies and actually brings about in each newly baptized person. (CCC, no. 1234)

2. Why is sin possible after Baptism?

Certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character . . . as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls *concupiscence*. (CCC, no. 1264)

God also gave us free will. While he gives us Baptism and the other Sacraments to help us make the correct choices, these Sacraments do not force a person to do good and to avoid sin.

3. What helps the growth of faith after Baptism?

For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism. . . . For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the god-father and godmother who must be firm believers and ready to help the newly baptized-child or adult-on the road of Christian life. (CCC, nos. 1254-1255)

Baptismal Character

"Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark

ARE CATHOLICS BORN-AGAIN?

A number of non-Catholic Christians call themselves "born-again." Catholics, for the most part, do not use this term. A "born-again" Christian is one who has experienced a particularly intense moment of conversion that leads him or her to want to dedicate his or her life to God. It is a one-time action that is not necessarily tied to any type of baptismal rite. While we Catholics are born again as children of God in the Sacrament of Baptism, our rebirth happens in and through the grace of the Sacrament. Our rebirth in Baptism is also not a one-time event but a lifelong process through which we continually strive to die to sin and rise to new life in Christ. Catholics are indeed born again.

(character) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation. Given once for all Baptism cannot be repeated" (CCC, no. 1272). This spiritual mark is also called a character, which St. Augustine likened to distinctive brandings impressed upon soldiers and slaves during Roman times to signify the commander or owner to whom they belonged. Baptism marks us permanently as belonging to Christ, whose image we bear.

BAPTISM IS A CALL TO HOLINESS

Reborn . . . [the baptized] . . . must participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.

-CCC, no. 1270

"Baptism is the door to life and to the Kingdom of God. Christ offered the first sacrament of the new law to all that they may have eternal life. Baptism is, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which men

and women, enlightened by the Spirit's grace, respond to the Gospel of Christ" ("Christian Initiation, General Instruction," in *The Rites of the Catholic Church* [1976], no. 3).

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit moves us to answer Christ's call to holiness. In Baptism, we are asked to walk by the light of Christ and to trust in his wisdom. We are invited to submit our hearts to Christ with ever deeper love. What is this light, this wisdom, this holiness? Jesus is clear about the high ideals to which he invites us:

Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mt 5:48)

Be merciful as your Father is merciful. (Lk 6:36)

Love one another as I love you. (Jn 15:12)

The Lord Jesus, our divine teacher and model of all virtue, preached holiness of life to everyone without exception. Through Baptism, we are cleansed of all sin, are made partakers of the divine nature, and are truly sanctified. Our goal now is to hold onto this gracious act of sanctification that we have received from Christ. St. Paul lays out a practical plan for holiness:

Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another. **If** one has a grievance against another, as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. (Col3:12-13)

This is a strong challenge that we cannot meet by human strength alone. "Accordingly, all Christians in the conditions, duties and circumstances of their life and through all these, will sanctify themselves more and more if they receive all things with faith from the hand of the heavenly Father and cooperate with the divine will, thus showing forth in the temporal service the love with which God has loved the world" (LG, no.

41). The baptized are called to transform the world with the light and power of the Gospel.

Living out one's Baptism is a lifelong responsibility. Growing in holiness and discipleship involves a willingness to continue to learn through-out one's whole life about the faith and how to live it. It also involves a willingness to support and encourage others who share the faith and who

have committed themselves to the ongoing process of conversion of heart and mind to God, which results in the holiness to which we are called.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. St. Paul tells us that in Baptism we die and rise with Christ. Why is it necessary to remember the "dying" part? If you were to do a survey of what Baptism means to people, what answers do you think you would hear?
2. What differences do you see between some "cradle Catholics" and those who have entered the Church through the RCIA? What are the responsibilities of godparents in looking after the growth in faith of the baptized they sponsor?
3. What is an effective way of attracting others to Christ?

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

- The Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
- The Risen Jesus commissioned the Apostles to baptize when he said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19-20).
- Baptism gives a person birth into new life. It is necessary for salvation and for entry into the Church.
- The rite of Baptism consists in immersing the person in water three times or pouring water on his or her head three times while invoking the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- The effects of Baptism are delivery from all sins (Original and personal), reception of the grace of divine adoption, being made a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit, initiation into the Church, and being made a sharer in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king.

- Baptism seals the person's soul with a permanent spiritual mark or character identifying one as belonging to Christ. Because of this character, Baptism cannot be repeated.
- People who die for the faith, catechumens who died before being baptized, and those who do not know Christ or the Church through no fault of their own but who, by the action of grace, seek God sincerely and do his will can be saved even without being baptized.
- Infants have been baptized since apostolic times, for this is a gift from God and does not presuppose human merit. Children are baptized in the faith of the Church.
- Trusting in God's mercy, we confidently hope for the salvation of children who die without Baptism.
- In time of necessity such as the danger of death, all persons can baptize. The person baptizing must intend to do what the Church does, by pouring water three times on the candidate's head while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

MEDITATION

By three immersions and as many invocations, the great mystery of Baptism is performed. So the appearance of death is conveyed, and through the handing over of divine knowledge the baptized are enlightened. Therefore, if there is any grace in the water, it is not because of any power the water may possess, but because it derives from the power of the Spirit. . . . The Lord, to prepare us for the risen life, lays before us all the gospel pre-cepts. We must avoid anger, endure evil, be free from the love of pleasure and the love of money. So by our own choice we shall achieve those things which are the natural endowments of the world to come.

-St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, XV, nos. 35-36

PRAYER

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin,
given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit,
and welcomed you into his holy people.

He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation.
As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King,
so may you live always as members of his body,
sharing everlasting life. Amen.

-Prayer for Anointing with Chrism,
Rite of Baptism

You were buried with him [Christ] in baptism,
in which you were also raised with him through
faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

— Col2:12